



**FINDING
CHILD**

**QUALITY
CARE**

FINDING QUALITY CHILD CARE

The most important job you as a parent will ever have is the job of raising your child. Choosing the right child care provider for you and your child is one of the most important choices you'll make.

The State of California regulates licensed child care facilities in order to protect and ensure the health, safety and well-being of California's children. Through various programs, the state of California also provides information on child care facilities and providers and gives local referrals.

This brochure provides you with information on licensing requirements, parental rights, types of child care available and some indicators of a quality child care setting. It is intended to help you find the best environment for you and your child.



RESOURCES

- **California Child Care Resource and Referral Network's Child Care Connection**

This is a project of the California Department of Education, Child Development Division, providing information on quality child care and local referrals, including Head Start and State-funded early care and education programs.

(800) KIDS-793

www.rrnetwork.org

- **California Department of Education, Child Development Division**

This division administers a variety of early care and education programs to improve the quality of child care and serve families throughout the state.

(916) 322-6233 www.cde.ca.gov



- **California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division**

This division oversees the licensing of child care facilities in California and ensures that your licensed provider is aware of and in compliance with child care regulations.



See the State Government section of your local phone book, or call (916) 229-4500 • www.dss.ca.gov

- **TrustLine**

Conducted by the California Department of Social Services, this statewide registry of in-home providers gives information on whether a provider has passed a background screening.

(800) 822-8490 • www.trustline.org

- **California Department of Developmental Services**

This Department administers the California Early Start Program which serves children with special needs from birth to age three.

(800) 515-BABY • www.dds.ca.gov/EarlyStart

LICENSING

To protect the health and safety of your children, the state of California has established licensing requirements for child care providers.



Adult-to-child ratios ensure that children receive adequate attention and supervision. The ratios vary depending on the type of setting, and the number and ages of the children. For instance, child

care centers are required to maintain a 12 to 1 ratio – 12 children to one licensed provider.

Providers must meet specific required qualifications for education and experience. ***Emergency pediatric first aid and CPR training are mandatory for all licensed providers, and at least one trained adult must be on the premises.***

For more information about licensing, contact the California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division at (916) 229-4500.

PARENTAL RIGHTS

As a parent you have the right to ensure your child's well-being while in the care of a provider. If you have concerns, feel free to discuss them with the provider.

If you are unable to resolve the issue and need a new provider, call the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network's Child Care Connection at (800) KIDS-793.



You have the right to check the child care center's files for possible complaints. Files must be kept on-site at all programs. If the files are not available on-site or if you have questions about the provider, call the California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division at (916) 229-4500.



You have the right to report any complaints about the health and safety of children to the number listed previously. In general, a visit to the site will take place within 10 days of the complaint.

CHILD CARE ENVIRONMENT

There are three child care options available for you to choose from.

Child Care Centers

Child care centers are licensed by the state of California to care for 12 or more children in a group setting. The required ratio is one provider for every twelve children. The infant ratio is one to four.

Centers can be small or big. In the larger centers the children are often grouped together by age and have separate areas and activities. Centers are generally located in public and private schools, religious facilities, or buildings owned or leased by the provider.

Licensed Family Child Care

Family child care is provided in the private home of a licensed caregiver for up to eight children with one adult or up to 14 children with one adult and one assistant provider. The infant ratio is one to four. This type of environment allows for children of different ages to share some activities together. This arrangement models a more family-oriented atmosphere and is generally less formal.

License-Exempt Care

Exempt care means that the provider is not required to be licensed by the state of California. This includes home-based providers, nannies, and au pairs. Home-based providers care for their own children and the children of one other family, in their own home or the other family's home.



Before choosing a provider, parents can contact the TrustLine Registry at (800) 822-8490 to obtain information or a background check on the provider. TrustLine is free



for families receiving state assistance. There is a cost for families not on state assistance. Some after-school care, park and recreation programs, and teen parent

programs are also license-exempt.

For more information on child care options or for local referrals call the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network's Child Care Connection at (800) KIDS-793. Located in every county throughout California, resource and referral agencies are in constant contact with parents and providers. A child care specialist will assist you with information and free referrals.

INDICATORS OF A QUALITY CHILD CARE ENVIRONMENT

Here are some things to look for when choosing the right environment for your child.

- Settings that are safe, provide small group sizes, and have adult-to-child ratios that encourage the best opportunities for development
- Caregivers or teachers who have experience and are trained in early childhood education and development
- Settings that offer opportunities for meaningful parent involvement
- Learning materials and teaching styles that are age-appropriate and respectful of children's cultural and ethnic heritages



- Learning opportunities that promote children's success in school

[Adapted from *What Are the Benefits of High Quality Programs?* Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1996.]

FINDING THE RIGHT PROVIDER

When choosing a provider, it's important to take your time and make an informed decision. Start looking early, long before you need child care.



Bring your child with you to meet the provider and explore the facility. Your child's first impressions are just as important as yours. Although a license ensures that minimal

standards are met, it is not a guarantee of a quality environment or provider.

The provider's training, experience and nurturing personality are some important

characteristics of a quality provider. Don't be afraid to ask questions. The provider should be eager to answer questions about the daily routine, eating, napping, toileting, activities, learning and play materials, staffing and any other questions you might have.

Following are some questions to ask and observations to make.

- ✓ Is the provider licensed?
- ✓ Are you provided with a copy of the policies?
- ✓ Can the provider give references?
- ✓ Does the provider enjoy being with children?
- ✓ Is the provider trained in early childhood education and knowledgeable about child development stages?
- ✓ What is the adult-to-child ratio?
- ✓ What are thier procedures for handling emergency situation?





✓ Does the center have a high staff turnover?

✓ Is parent involvement welcomed?

✓ Are the rates affordable for you and the hours convenient?

✓ What are the provider's discipline methods?

✓ What is the daily routine?

✓ Are there age-appropriate toys and activities for your child?

✓ Is the facility clean and safe?

✓ Is the provider CPR certified and trained in pediatric first aid (as required by law)?

✓ Is there adequate indoor and outdoor play space for children?

✓ Are there separate areas for diapering, eating, sleeping, resting and exploring?

✓ Are medications kept in a locked container and away from the children?

Once you have chosen a provider and placed your child in care, you should follow up and regularly check on your child's progress. Drop in unannounced or call to find out how things are going. When you drop off or pick up your child, take a minute to watch your child and talk to the provider.

Ask your child about his or her day. Pay attention to whether he or she seems to be happy and adjusting well. Your child should look forward to being with the provider. Your child should be learning new things.

Most of all, trust your instincts. You know your child better

than anyone else and you know what is best for his or her well-being. If you have feelings about the provider or the environment, whether positive or negative, chances are your child will feel them too.





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Prepared in cooperation with the **California Department of Education**
– Child Development Division

Designed and Printed by Senate Reprographics